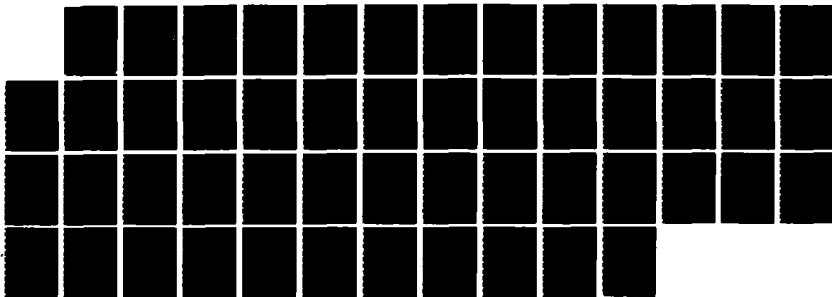
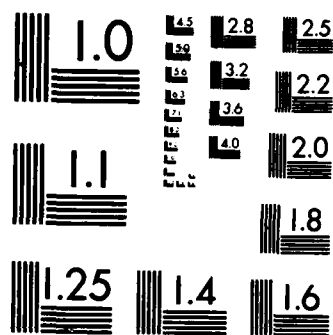


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THE UNIFIED COMMAND SYSTEM  
AND UNITY OF COMMAND

by

MAJOR RAYMOND R. DRUMMOND  
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## THE UNIFIED COMMAND SYSTEM AND UNITY OF COMMAND

Major Raymond R. Drummond, USA, 43 pages.

This study examines the ability of the current Unified Command System to provide unity of command and thereby obtain unity of effort in multi-service operations. After a brief review of the doctrinal underpinnings of the current system two historical case studies are developed -- Desert One and Grenada. These operations are viewed with the intent of determining the degree of adherence to the dictates of the current system and the unity of effort obtained.

The study reveals that in both cases a departure from the existing system was evidenced. OPSEC played a critical part in detracting from the unity of effort obtainable, this largely because of the compartmentalization in planning. Additionally, ad hoc command and control and staffing arrangements evident in both cases may have been motivated by service rivalry and/or political concessions. The study concludes that existing doctrine appears adequate, though there is evidence of service resistance towards integration. This is characterized by the lack of authority generally provided to unifying entities. The resultant imbalance between responsibility and authority allows only for a loose confederation of single service forces. Lastly, service parochialism appears to emanate largely from a dearth of joint expertise and an absence of mutual confidence and trust.

The study recommends that efforts to overcome this resistance must be initiated. These actions should include the following: enhanced education of mid-grade officers on the capabilities, techniques, and limitations of sister services, strict adherence to existing staffing guidance provided in UNAAF for multi-service commands, increased authority for unifying entities, and significant measures to enhance the prestige and rewards of joint service.

THE UNIFIED COMMAND SYSTEM  
AND UNITY OF COMMAND

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## ABSTRACT

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Major Raymond R. Drummond, USA, 43 pages.

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The study recommends that efforts to overcome this resistance must be initiated. These actions should include the following: enhanced education of mid-grade officers on the capabilities, techniques, and limitations of sister services, strict adherence to existing staffing guidance provided in UNAAF for multi-service commands, increased authority for unifying entities, and significant measures to enhance the prestige and rewards of joint service.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Nothing is so important in war as an undivided command.

Napoleon  
"Maxims of War"

Much has been written of late denigrating the effectiveness of the current Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) structure. The more vocal aspects of this commentary have generally focused on the role of the Chairman of the JCS and or relationship with the respective service chiefs. However, a less audible, yet more studied discussion has delved into the next tier of the organization -- the role of various Commander's-in-Chief (CINCs) of the Unified Commands. Several articulate critics and reformers are suggesting that the current Unified Command System is inadequate to its task. In other words, it is unable to provide for unity of effort or unity of command in potential future crises that may confront the military establishment of the United States. These critics contend that this is largely attributable to an untenable imbalance of power between the CINCs and their various service component chiefs, an imbalance that severely limits the capability of the CINCs, and consequently the Unified Command System, to provide for the essential unity of effort.

This paper will examine the existing Unified Command System to assess its ability to provide for unity of command or effort. For the purpose of this examination the two terms will be used interchangeably, unless dictated

otherwise stated. The examination will be limited in scope to just this one major aspect -- unity of command -- rather than branching out into the numerous other relevant issues, such as logistics, command and control (C<sup>2</sup>) hardware, joint operational doctrine, etc.

The relevance of this issue may be in question, and it is therefore appropriate to digress momentarily in order to address this question further. Martin Van Creveld in his recent book on the subject of command offers some interesting insights. He contends that the complexity of command has increased exponentially since 1939. Specifically, he feels that this increased complexity results from the increased demands made by the significantly enhanced mobility and increased dispersal of modern armed forces. In this regard he feels that a superior command system can make possible a faster, clearer assessment of the situation and result in a more optimal distribution of a commander's combat assets.<sup>1</sup> A recent article in Military Review translates these thoughts specifically into the joint arena,

...the most difficult aspect of strategic C<sup>2</sup> is its role in coordinating the employment of forces drawn from the several uniformed services - despite the Unified Commands, problems still exist in the effectiveness<sub>2</sub> with which joint forces are employed.

LTG John Cushman, U. S. Army (Ret.), has done considerable scholarly work in describing some of these problems. He contends that there has been, over time (since 1958), a pervasive weakening of the chain of command within the unified commands, and that this has resulted in a denigration of the readiness and performance of U.S. multi-service forces. He further argues that this endemic weakness is dangerous to the security interests of the U. S. He elaborates on the origins of this weakness,

...they stem in a fundamental way from the strengths of individual services in the institutional mechanisms of the Department of Defense and in the service-oriented culture which runs throughout the armed forces...strength is exercised through the service chiefs as they sit as members of essentially-a-committee Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>3</sup>

These serious charges require further examination. For instance, is it true that the Unified Command System should promote unity of effort, and if so, how is this need demonstrated? Though he is at times faulted for looking at war uni-dimensionally, Clausewitz can at least be excused for not considering the role of air assets. However, he did contend (when speaking of the various branches of the Army) that a synergy could result from unification: "...in war a combination of the three arms leads to a more complete use of all of them."<sup>4</sup> LTG Cushman argues that the problem becomes one of how a command structure provides its

operational commanders the confidence to exercise the necessary authoritative direction to accomplish their mission. This must be evident not only in the heat of combat, but also in the course of peacetime day-to-day activities essential to assuring the readiness of the unified command.<sup>5</sup>

It is generally assumed that future conflicts involving the United States ill be fought with joint forces. President Eisenhower, in 1958, therefore addressed the need for providing a system of unified command,

...Separate ground, sea, and air warfare is gone forever. If ever again we should be involved in war, we will fight it in all elements, with all services, as one single concentrated effort. Peacetime preparatory and organizational activity must conform to this fact. Strategic and tactical planning must be completely unified, combat forces organized into unified commands, each equipped with the most efficient weapons systems that science can develop, singly led and prepared to fight as one, regardless of service.<sup>6</sup>

Given this need for unified action, the absence of an effective means to provide the desired unity of effort is alarming. Portending an even more disastrous scenario for the future would be a situation where the unified command system of the U. S., in place since 1958, could be shown to have inadequately provided for unity of effort in instances where it has recently been employed.

The remainder of this paper will assess the ability of the current U. S. Unified Command System to provide for unity of effort. First, we will examine how the system has been designed to function. With that background we will then review two recent U. S. military operations, Desert One (the Iranian Hostage Rescue attempt) and Grenada, to discern the degree of adherence to the established system and the unity of effort maintained. Given that assessment, conclusions will be offered and these will then be viewed in a historical context. The paper will then close with a discussion of the implications of this assessment for the future.

## II. HOW SHOULD IT WORK?

For every objective, there should be unity of effort under one responsible commander.

Existing doctrine dealing with the issue of unity of effort is fairly clear and to the point. Both the U. S. Air Force and the U. S. Army in their capstone doctrinal manuals (AFM 1-1 and FM 100-5, respectively) deal with the need for unity of effort and spell out the necessary measures that have to be taken to achieve that desired end. Furthermore, JCS Publication #2, Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF) provides a joint doctrinal perspective on the maintenance of unity of effort. This document delineates responsibilities and authorities within the Unified Command System. With all

of the foregoing available it would appear that the absence of doctrinal guidance is not an issue. What, then, does this doctrinal guidance tell us about unity of effort?

FM 100-5 gives extensive treatment to the subject. In defining unified commands, the Army's manual tells us that this condition exists whenever forces from two or more services are operating under the operational command of a single unified CINC who exercises this command through various service component commanders. When necessary the CINC may establish a subordinate unified command or a joint task force (JTF) to conduct a specific mission. The CINCs of unified commands are charged with the responsibility to develop operational plans (OPLAN), contingency plans (CONPLAN), and operations orders (OPORD) for their specific geographic area of responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

This manual also gives extensive treatment to how these commands operate to assure unity of effort. The President, by law, is the CINC of the Armed Forces and is assisted by the various Unified and Specified CINCs at the operational level. Unity of command is essential to employing military forces in a manner that develops their full combat power by directing and coordinating the action of all these forces toward a common goal or objective. Even though this may be achieved by cooperation, FM 100-5 affirms that it is better to vest a single commander with the necessary authority to accomplish this objective.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, the treatment given

JTFs in this manual is worthy of note. A JTF is created to perform a mission having a specific, limited objective of short duration and is commanded by a commander who will exercise operational control over the entire force. The designated overall commander will normally augment his own staff with representatives from the other services.<sup>10</sup>

The Air Force manual (AFM 1-1) addresses unified command in similar terms; however, it more clearly relates its purpose to providing unity of effort. It defines the function of command as the vehicle by which the members of an interdependent team (the services) are integrated and employed in a unified effort. This unity of effort is the responsibility of the specified and unified combatant commands. This manual very clearly relates the linkage between command and unity of effort in this arrangement,

...Command is the exercise of leadership and the power of decision over Armed Forces to gain unity of effort toward a common objective. Unity of effort among service forces assigned to these commands is achieved by exercise of operational command through the specified or unified commander, adherence to strategic objectives, and a sound operational and administrative command organization.<sup>11</sup>

This linkage is further developed in the discussion of unity of command in the principles of war portion of the manual. The wording itself is very close to that found in the Army's manual,



...Unity of command, combined with common doctrine, obtains unity of effort by the coordinated action of all forces toward a common goal. While coordination may be obtained by cooperation, it is best achieved by giving a single commander full authority.<sup>12</sup>

In that the U. S. Navy and the U. S. Marine Corps do not have equivalent doctrinal manuals, we are left with only one additional document to examine -- the bible for the Unified Command System, JCS Pub #2.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have promulgated the Unified Action Armed Forces (JCS Pub #2) for the information and guidance of all concerned (the unified and specified commands, and the services). This manual details for its users what constitutes "operational command" (synonymous with operational control) -- i.e., the functions of command involving the composition of subordinate forces, tasking authority, selection of objectives, and the "authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission." However, the following activities are not included: administration, logistics, discipline, internal organization, and training (unless the subordinate requests assistance).<sup>13</sup> Logically then, this command is exercised through the service component commanders or through a subordinate command (to the unified command) command when established by the unified commander. The manual then specifies that a sound command organization is expected to provide for: centralized

direction, decentralized execution, and common doctrine. This common doctrine, it appears, is designed to fill voids that may develop in attempting to assure unity of effort,

...common doctrine is essential for mutual understanding and confidence between a commander and his subordinates, and among the subordinates themselves, so that timely and effective action will be taken by all concerned in the absence of specific instructions.<sup>14</sup>

One final point with respect to command. The manual is very clear in specifying that the predominant "function" (ground, air, or sea fighting) involved in a military operation usually should determine the service identity of the overall commander.<sup>15</sup>

Given that background, the next subject relevant to the discussion is identification of the primary responsibilities of the unified commanders and related to that, guidelines for staffing. Apart from the normal expected responsibilities, one in particular is of interest in this study,

...assign tasks to, and direct coordination among, his subordinate commands to insure unity of effort in the accomplishment of his assigned missions.<sup>16</sup>

In providing details on the composition of a unified (or for that matter, joint) commander's staff, JCS Pub #2 elaborates extensively on the need to provide the commander adequate representation from all of his components to insure

he fully understands the tactics, techniques, capabilities, needs, and limitations of each component part of his forces. Furthermore, it is imperative that this staff be reasonably balanced with regard to the composition of the forces in the command and the character of the operations.<sup>17</sup> In other words it is deemed important, in furtherance of unity of effort, that the unified commander have a force composition that supports his mission and a staff balanced accordingly. This arrangement is intended to overcome cultural voids in knowledge about capabilities, tactics, and techniques and to enable the unified commander to achieve unity of effort in his theater.

In sum, the Unified Command System as articulated in the various doctrinal manuals should provide for unity of command and thereby obtain unity of effort. This is achieved by providing for a common doctrine, a single overall commander charged with assuring unity of effort, and a joint staff balanced to insure service representation and influence proportional to the service composition of the command. With that background we may now confidently proceed to evaluate our two historical case studies and assess how effectively the doctrine was applied. In so doing we may also examine the limitations, if any, of existing doctrine to provide for unity of effort in joint operations.

### III. DESERT ONE

...the parts all performed, but they  
didn't necessarily perform as a team.<sup>18</sup>

In an overview of the ill-fated Iranian hostage rescue mission, three major issues surface as principal contributors to the failure experienced during the operation. First, the clouded chain of command at the lower levels caused confusion that could ill be afforded. Second, ironically, the JCS directive for compartmentation of all planning to meet Operations Security (OPSEC) concerns, though necessary for mission success, served to dilute further the already clouded chain of command. The issue is not that OPSEC should or should not have been observed, rather that overemphasis on it seriously hampered integration of command and planning efforts. Lastly, service rivalry reared its head in the training and selection of the helicopter pilots and in an indirect way adversely influenced the confused chain of command.

The issue of unclear command and control lines was not so much a matter of ambiguity, but rather a lack of complete knowledge throughout the joint task force. A good deal of this lack of knowledge could be attributed to the requirement for OPSEC and its resulting compartmentation of everything from planning to training. However, there were some obvious omissions that tended to exacerbate problems that could not be avoided. The training, especially that of

the air elements, was done within a very unclear command structure. LTG Philip Gast (USAF) who was not designated the deputy commander of the JTF until 12 April 1980, had been responsible to MG James Vaught (USA), the commander, for monitoring helicopter and C130 training prior to that date. The senior Marine present with the helicopter group supervised their training yet was not formally in the chain of command. Lastly, there was the helicopter flight leader who was responsible for that element of the JTF; however, he was not staffed to provide the administrative support that was required. Given the absence of a clear chain of command for this part of the preparation (no one in the JTF saw to its integration) unity of effort was not obtained.<sup>19</sup>

Command at the actual Desert One location was on the surface clear, however, its communication and dissemination to members of the JTF left much to be desired. COL James Kyle (USAF) was designated the on-site commander late during the preparatory phase of the operation. He was severely disadvantaged in being able to determine command problems that he might expect to experience at the desert site as this portion of the mission was never completely rehearsed with all players present. The Marine pilots operating under his control at the desert site didn't know who he was or his position in the chain. Understandably, he had failed to anticipate the difficulty of performing his task and therefore inadequate attention had been paid to developing

the technical means and procedures to insure unity of command. As will be shown later, this was largely attributable to compartmentalization necessitated by OPSEC considerations.<sup>20</sup>

The commander's lack of indepth involvement with training during the preparatory phase further contributed to this lack of integration. MG Vaught did visit training; however, his supervisory effort was primarily based out of Washington. The coordination of joint training was severely hampered by allowing after-action briefings and critiques to be conducted at separate locations for each of the elements of the JTF. Effective force integration leading to better coordination among the various elements of the JTF could have been enhanced by more face-to-face exchange, which could have been achieved under a commander sensitized to the need to insure better integration and unity of effort in the preparation phase.<sup>21</sup>

Some of the problems with insuring unity of effort that emanated from the need to adhere to strict OPSEC measures have already been addressed; however, this subject requires further consideration. OPSEC in this instance, as in many others, was really a two-edged sword. Mission success could be jeopardized in the absence of surprise, and OPSEC was essential to assuring surprise. However, with the acknowledged benefit of hindsight, the Holloway Commission in their review determined that slightly greater selectivity

and flexibility in the OPSEC arena (especially within the JTF itself) could have been very beneficial without prejudicing security. One of the major negative outgrowths of this concern for OPSEC was the compartmentation of almost all aspects of the preparation for the operation. This tended to dilute unity of effort. Nowhere was this effect as great as in the organization of the JTF staff. When MG Vaught received his tasking on 12 November 1979, he took as the nucleus of his JTF staff the ad hoc rescue planning cell that had been working on the problem for less than a week. This decision, motivated largely by OPSEC considerations, led to the avoidance of using any existing CONPLANS that had already been developed for similar scenarios. Many of the problems that follow can be traced back to this decision.<sup>22</sup>

The first of these relates to interface with the intelligence community. Because this operation was planned "off-line" by an ad hoc staff, normal interfaces with the intelligence community did not exist, and it was felt that tapping directly into the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) would compromise OPSEC. Therefore the JTF was unable effectively to bring together an integrated intelligence supporting mechanism, all of which could have been avoided had the DIA been charged with the responsibility or had one of the existing unified commands been used.<sup>23</sup> One example of what this produced at the execution level was a disconnect on weather briefings. The treacherous desert

storms which caused helicopter problems were predicted by the weather forecasters, but they themselves didn't personally brief the pilots (OPSEC again) -- this was done by the intelligence staff. This information on the storms was apparently lost in the transmission, and as a consequence, preparation under these adverse type of conditions was never integrated into the training of the helicopter pilots. These circumstances are far removed from those expected where unity of effort is obtained.<sup>24</sup>

The entire planning effort was destined to lack integration and coordination by virtue of the overemphasis on OPSEC and the resulting conditions mandated by compartmentation. In the words of one critic,

...prolonged ad hoc arrangements often result in tasking from different sources and can cause confusion at the operating level.<sup>25</sup>

With any plan for a complex operation, a review by external planners is absolutely essential to determine feasibility and efficacy. Within the normal JCS system this process is adhered to extensively for all CONPLANS and OPLANS. In this case, however (and MG Vaught realized the disadvantage of executing a plan without the benefit of this "murder board"), the JCS themselves undertook this responsibility without the staffing support and expertise normally available to them. In the words of one critic, "...security was more important than feasibility."<sup>26</sup>



The last major problem area attributable to this overemphasis on OPSEC relates to training. There was never a thoroughly integrated training exercise (rehearsal) of the entire JTF to execute the final plan. Each element commander individually certified his readiness. Such a rehearsal would have increased inter-unit coordination and perhaps suggested necessary changes to the plan. At least all of the helicopters and C130s could have been assembled at one time under conditions similar to those expected at Desert One, and the difficulties eventually experienced in real life could have been anticipated beforehand.<sup>27</sup>

The last major issue in this examination deals indirectly with the resistance to integration and the resultant lessening of unity of effort. Like so many of the decisions, the decision on which helicopters to use and who would fly them was adversely affected by the overemphasis on OPSEC. Since U. S. Navy carriers would be the launching platform, the RH53D (normally found with the fleet) was selected to minimize satellite signatures that might violate OPSEC. Up to this point it makes sense. However, in considering the selection of pilots, some problems arise. The rationale to use Marine pilots to fly the helicopters is not very convincing in light of the evidence that favored using the abundant number of special operations qualified Air Force pilots that were available. Specifically, the lessons of the 1961 "Jungle Jim" project determined that it

was far easier to transition pilots to new equipment, rather than to transition them to new conceptual and operational techniques, i.e., Air Force pilots to the RH53D, rather than Marine pilots to special operations missions. One vocal critic assails this point as evidence of the desire for all services "to get in on the action" and do their part.<sup>28</sup> This point might not be as critical were it not for the fact that in the final analysis the problem with the helicopters getting to Desert One caused the mission to abort and ultimately turned it into disaster. Would unity of effort and the mission have been better served with Air Force pilots?

Admittedly, Desert One was a special case. And yes, the demand for OPSEC was paramount in providing any hope for success. But in viewing this operation, with the benefit of hindsight, in terms of how the Unified Command System is designed to work, to coordinate, and to provide unity of effort we must begin to suspect that the system either is flawed or was not adhered to. As the Holloway Commission stated,

...the application of an existing JCS CONPLAN and JCS/Service doctrinal precepts could have improved the organization, planning, and preparation of the force through unity of command and cohesion of effort.<sup>29</sup>

Though command at the higher levels may have been clear, it certainly was cloudy at levels below the JTF

Commander. The ad hoc staffing arrangements exaggerated the difficulty planners experienced in insuring unity of effort under the compartmentation mandated by OPSEC. Together the above two factors militated against effective integration of the components by obviating the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive full scale training rehearsal. Unity of effort was not obtained, yet this shortcoming, by itself, did not result in the failure of the operation.

#### IV. GRENADA

...The operational deficiencies evident during the Vietnam War, the seizure of the Pueblo, the Iranian hostage rescue mission, and the incursion into Grenada were the result of the failure to adequately implement the concept of unified command.<sup>30</sup>

Although for Grenada there is not an unclassified governmental study similar to the Holloway Commission review on Iran, numerous unofficial accounts appear consistent in their appraisals of the operation. With a view toward studying the effectiveness of the Unified Command System in providing for unity of effort, five major areas require additional scrutiny. They are the failure to use the existing CONPLAN/JTF, a violation of existing joint doctrine (UNAAF), inadequate command of ground forces, over-compartmentation of planning for OPSEC reasons, and the lack of integrated air and indirect fire support. Each of these separately would tend to militate against unity of effort.

Collectively, they would challenge the ability of even the most effective commander to assure unity of effort.

The lack of preparation time relative to that available for the Desert One operation would appear to have made Grenada an excellent candidate for exercise of an on-the-shelf CONPLAN by an existing JTF. In fact, the Atlantic Command (LANTCOM), the Unified Command responsible for the area, received its warning order from JCS on 19 October 1983. As it turned out, this actually was less than a week before forces were to be in combat. The next day the National Security Council (NSC) diverted Amphibious Squadron 4 toward the area. Ground force elements were really not apprised of the operation until 22 October, three days before the operation began. ADM Wesley MacDonald, CINCLANT, designated VADM Joseph Metcalfe, one of his fleet commanders, as the Commander of the JTF which LANTCOM put together for the operation (JTF120). This action was taken, for whatever unexplained reasons, even though another contingency JTF headquarters based in Key West was already targeted for this area (Commander, U. S. Forces Caribbean). Ironically, an exercise called Ocean Venture '81 had been conducted during August 1981 in the vicinity of Vieques, Puerto Rico. Essentially, this headquarters (based in Key West) had planned and conducted a mock invasion for the purpose of rescuing American hostages. President Maurice Bishop of Grenada at the time even indicated that he felt

this "demonstration" had been aimed at him.<sup>31</sup> This departure from an existing JTF and CONPLAN caused numerous problems in planning for the operation, but before we examine those issues additional commentary on the actual composition of the forces is necessary.

Initially, and possibly accounting for the decision to create a new JTF, a pure Navy-Marine force was envisioned as all that would be necessary to accomplish the mission. CINCLANT discarded this option because of the need simultaneously to secure multiple targets in the eastern and southern portions of the island. GEN John Vessey, the Chairman of the JCS, contends that there were good reasons for expanding this task force -- the Marines were already in the vicinity (but inadequate to the entire task), the Rangers and Special Operations Forces could provide the special skills required by some point targets, and the 82nd Airborne Division would ensure adequate combat power was available and allow for the early redeployment of the Marines to Lebanon. So the JTF grew quickly (in a matter of days) to incorporate all services; however, it was built around a headquarters and staff established almost entirely by one of the components of the unified command.<sup>32</sup>

Bill Lind, among others, contends that this was really a phenomenon of another sort -- evidence once more of the service rivalry and political concessions within the JCS arena to allow all services a part in the operation.<sup>33</sup> This

argument, though perhaps having some merit, misses the larger issue. Did the Unified Command System fail to provide an organizational structure and a logically proportioned force capable of obtaining unity of effort in a combat operation? For what at the time must have seemed cogent reasons, the existing in place structure was bypassed in deference to creating an ad hoc structure. Similar to the Desert One experience, this was done at great cost in terms of an integrated, unified effort.

In the words of Edward Luttwak, LANTCOM is really a naval fiefdom rather than a true unified command. In that CINCLANT has no major Army and Air Force components, and therefore limited staff representation from those services, this criticism becomes credible.<sup>34</sup> This inadequate representation on the staff, especially by senior Army officers, inhibited the ability of the staff to see far enough into the operation to envision the extensive ground operations that would ultimately be required. True, some of this was due to a hazy intelligence picture that placed potential enemy strength at 700 Cubans, 1200-1500 regular Grenadian Army forces, and 2000-5000 militia. The vital missing element was an accurate assessment of how many of these forces would actively resist, and to what degree.<sup>35</sup> As the operation became more and more a ground operation, the impact of this paucity of army staffing in JTF headquarters began to be felt. In the words of several

critics, the predominantly Navy and Marine planners failed to comprehend fully the capabilities of the other ground forces and rather than plan for a coup de main they chose instead the "amphibious nibbling approach of a Normandy type operation."<sup>36</sup> Certainly this criticism could be overstated, but some of the byproducts of this whole process were detrimental to the interests of success and unity of effort. The commander of this joint operation was left with an inappropriate staff for the mission, planning that provided for questionable use of his forces, inadequate command and control means, lack of a unified ground force command element (other than his headquarters afloat), and a staff generally inexperienced in overcoming the many multi-service coordination problems that arose.<sup>37</sup> Again, this is not really the condition one would expect to obtain given the Unified Command System articulated earlier in this paper.

One of the points made above merits additional study and comment. The chain of command for ground forces operating in Grenada was internally clear to each separate element; however, the number of these independent ground forces operating in the same general area and reporting directly to the JTF Commander, VADM Metcalfe, called into question the effectiveness of that arrangement. On D-Day there were six different ground force elements reporting to the JTF Commander (two Ranger battalions, lead elements of the 82d Airborne Division, one Marine battalion, and two

separate Special Operations Forces elements). Admittedly, MG Norman Schwartzkopf, appointed deputy commander at the last minute, became the de facto ground component commander; however, he had to execute command from on board the USS Guam without separate staffing and adequate communication links. It was very difficult to satisfy all normal coordination responsibilities between the various ground elements given the above hindrances. A great deal of individual initiative by the various element leaders on the ground overcame the resulting difficulties; however, the oversight is unconscionable in light of doctrinal provisions stated previously. This problem was evident even within the Army itself; the Ranger battalions both understood that they were to become subordinate to the 82d Airborne Division, but their understanding of the effective time differed significantly. Lastly, it was not until D+6 (3 November) that VADM Metcalfe finally transferred entire responsibility for ground operations to MG Edward Trobaugh -- the senior ground commander on shore since late on D-Day.<sup>38</sup>

The compartmentation of planning, though not as severe as during the Desert One operation, still detracted from the overall unity of effort. For obvious reasons OPSEC again was a major concern. However, the potential for planning voids in this crisis situation was far greater. This is especially true considering the inadequate staffing described earlier. The inability of various ground



components to share plans and effect coordination prior to D-Day, perhaps necessitated by the shortage of time as much as the need for OPSEC, created potential opportunities for disaster and denigrated the unity of effort achievable on the ground.

Lastly, the inability to integrate all fire support means inhibited the ability of the ground forces to employ the full potential firepower available to them. Generally, the support provided to Army elements by AC130 gunships was excellent; however, the use of naval air support by the Army was an entirely different matter. On the bright side, the resourcefulness displayed by Army units (calling by telephone to Fort Bragg to access a satellite connection to the Navy commander afloat) speaks well of the players, but raises questions about organizational procedures that certainly should be overcome by any command system attempting to provide unity of effort.<sup>39</sup>

In conclusion, Grenada, though in many respects vastly dissimilar from the Desert One operation, was still plagued by many of the same detractors from unity of effort. OPSEC and the resulting compartmentation were not as great an inhibitor in this case; however, the divergence from the existing Unified Command System appears comparable. To underscore that point, what were almost blatant deviations from UNAAF (joint staffing, etc.) understandably had the effect that UNAAF attempts to preclude: specifically a

failure to understand a component's tactics, techniques, and capabilities which led ultimately to misapplication of that component of the unified command. The result lacked unity of effort because the pieces failed to work together in an integrated fashion. True, no disaster resulted -- but what if the level of sophistication of the opposing force had been comparable to that of U. S. forces?

## V. CONCLUSIONS

...One cannot point to any specific disaster as having been caused by the current structure. Concerns about poor planning and budgeting advice, or potential problems of command during a crisis, have not been sufficient to galvanize either the executive or the legislative branch into action.

Initial reflection on the above quote and the portions of this paper that precede it would tend to support the notion that, on surface, joint doctrine for providing unity of effort appears adequate. What was observed in the two recent operations that were reviewed in this paper is that in neither case was the doctrine followed. As a result, the absence of unity of effort could be attributed to this lack of compliance. But is it really that simple?

It is not. For one thing, because of the special operations nature of both these examples, OPSEC became a dominant factor. In both cases that factor contributed to the creation of ad hoc organizations to command and plan the

operation. Furthermore, consideration for OPSEC forced compartmentation in the planning for both missions (more so in Desert One than Grenada) with a resulting denigration of unity of effort. Which brings us to the question -- was this an example of: acceptable non-compliance with the dictates of the system, poor execution of the system, an unwillingness to allow the system to work (as some would have us believe), or an indication (as reformers contend) that this is an endemic problem of the Unified Command System?

Senator Sam Nunn, a leading spokesman for the JCS reform movement, has strong views on this issue, as do others. Senator Nunn contends that,

...U. S. armed forces have serious problems conducting joint operations. We were lucky in Grenada; we may not be so fortunate next time.<sup>41</sup>

The Hudson Institute, though supporting the Senator's contention, at least appears to absolve the statutory foundations from culpability,

...in light of Iran and Grenada problems may be evident in the operational chain of command. They require further examination by the JCS, Unified Commands, and the Services. Such chain of command problems are organizational and not intrinsic in the statutory foundations of the JCS.<sup>42</sup>

The current Chairman of the JCS, ADM Crowe does not appear to share entirely the sentiments of the Hudson Institute as he elaborates on the issue,

...the component commander is in two command lines....definitional lines between the two are often muddy. In turn, this situation diffuses authority and complicates<sup>43</sup> operational/strategic decisionmaking.

In this there appears some agreement as the Hudson Institute suggests that,

...operational flexibility militates against detailed definition<sup>44</sup> of operational command in law.

Perhaps then, the underlying cause of this problem of assuring unity of effort at the operational level of command emanates from an ambiguity in defining the authority available to the operational commander in the Unified Command System. After all, a 200 page pamphlet was required to detail the complex web of command relationships for GEN Westmoreland's Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.<sup>45</sup>

Senator Nunn believes the root causes in this lack of truly unified commands are firmly embedded in the current organizational structure of the Department of Defense. It is his belief that there is no unification (nor ever really was) because the services were (and are!) reluctant to integrate and subordinate their forces into the multi-service unified commands.<sup>46</sup> Richard Gabriel argues

that this condition is evidenced by the willingness of the services to sacrifice operational requirements to bureaucratic interests generally along service lines. In the worst case this need to reconcile conflicting bureaucratic pressures within the joint planning structure would then dictate operational considerations. Gabriel goes on to suggest that major assumptions of operational plans go unchallenged in order to protect bureaucratic consensus, and once this consensus has been achieved the details are planned entirely within the components. Component commanders are free to develop their own operational prerogatives in execution of their mission.<sup>47</sup> The foregoing represents a condition far removed from what appears to be intended by the Unified Command System doctrine we examined earlier and any that would support unity of effort.

One last critic needs to be heard from. LTG Cushman feels there is a very discernible disconnect for the unified commanders between responsibility on the one hand and authority on the other. He contends that the underlying cause is the prevailing service-dominated culture of U. S. multi-service operational commands. Commanders of the unified commands lack the full operational command that Congress had intended for them in the 1958 Amendment to the National Security Act. The committee system (described above by Gabriel) for command and control, Cushman contends, is unable to bring about the optimal level of unity of

effort that might otherwise be obtainable.<sup>48</sup> To develop a better perspective on this new dimension of the problem of unity of effort, an examination of its historical roots is necessary.

## VI. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE UNIFIED COMMAND SYSTEM

...the military organizations given responsibility for planning and execution of joint operations --...JCS, the Joint Staff and the Unified Commands, are simply unable<sup>49</sup> to carry out their jobs effectively.

In the days prior to World War II joint operations were far simpler from a unity of command perspective. The Joint Action of the Army and Navy (JAAN) of 1925 provided all the guidance that was necessary. It stated essentially, when Army and Navy forces were required to operate together the "service of paramount interest" would be responsible for the operations. In 1941 this was amended to reflect that "mutual cooperation" and not unified command was to be the preferred method in joint operations of the future. Only after the debacle at Pearl Harbor did the notion of unified command regain pre-eminence.<sup>50</sup> As part of the experience of World War II each service left that conflict with a different approach to command as part of its cultural tradition. These differences were then preserved in the National Security Act (NSA) of 1947. Essentially the Army and Air Force were comfortable with command relationships

that centralized power, with an appropriate amount of delegation along functional lines. The Navy, on the other hand, was more "federal" in its structure based largely on the heritage of "autonomy of the captain at sea."<sup>51</sup>

From the outset these cultural differences tended to militate against a strong Unified Command System where power was centralized. In recognition of this, President Eisenhower began to lobby for reform and ultimately this led to the NSA Amendment of 1958. This amendment created the Unified Command System virtually as we know it today, with operating forces assigned to the unified and specified commands. However, even with the President's strong advocacy this document still proved to be a compromise.<sup>52</sup> Even though this legislation attempted to replace the existing "executive agent" concept with the Unified Command System, leading supporters of the Navy in Congress (Representative Vinson in particular) blocked effective movement toward unification. This continued to allow the components to remain virtually autonomous under the unified commander.<sup>53</sup> In the view of Senator Goldwater, the weak unified command structure that was born of this process limits the ability of the U. S. to protect its interests and as a result,

...national security is still held  
hostage to<sup>54</sup> the will of the individual  
services.

Were it that simple the matter could have been resolved long ago. Regretably, there are good reasons that allow the "separatists" to champion their cause in the arena of intellectual debate. Far more fundamental opposition than "fear of the man on horseback" theories are proffered by these forces. As has already been intimated, the Navy is unquestionably the staunchest opponent of unification, and as COL William Hanne would have us believe, for good reasons:

Throughout the Navy there would be the constant unspoken fear that the United States, like Sparta, would have a theater commander who would not understand the *raison d'etre* or the potential of his Navy and would keep it only in direct support of his land forces, thus losing both his fleet and the battle, as did Sparta.<sup>55</sup>

A Navy view of JCS reorganization is even more illuminating,

...In a perfect world we might have joint staff experts, but in our world we must sacrifice a little jointness to get operational competence.<sup>56</sup>

The Navy quite logically does not view things from the same perspective as the other two services. For where the latter lack joint capabilities and are truly dependent on the other services for their missing components, the Navy is a "unified" service already -- it has its own "Army" and "Air Force" internally. Therefore, within the Navy there is



no clamor to seek unification, unless perhaps it can add to the existing capabilities of the Navy.

Against the foregoing background we have in the current Unified Command System numerous forces at work that are contrary to the interests of unity of effort. The services, to varying degrees, strive to keep command in Service channels and away from the multi-service commander.<sup>57</sup> In the words of a Congressional study, in place of a truly unified command we have nothing but a "loose confederation of single-service forces." An environment where the unified commanders have limited authority over the service components, limited influence over resources, and little ability to promote greater unity of effort within their commands.<sup>58</sup> In the words of a 1970 Blue Ribbon Defense Panel,

...The net result is an organizational structure in which "unification" of either command or of the forces is more cosmetic than substantive.<sup>59</sup>

It is agreed by most outside experts that the unified commanders should be significantly strengthened, that they should be granted greater influence and authority in the Department of Defense, and that they should have stronger control over their subordinate organizations.<sup>60</sup> If memory serves us well, that sounds very similar to the situation in 1958 that ultimately became the catalyst for the 1958 Amendment. We must conclude then that very little real

progress has been made in this movement toward a truly Unified Command System capable of assuring unity of effort in the conduct of multi-service operations. What to do about it?

## VII. IMPLICATIONS

...War is the great auditor of institutions. We are not ready for an audit in joint operations.<sup>61</sup>

The National Command Authority should have sufficient confidence in the current Unified Command System that, should a crisis ensue, the system can respond quickly, with appropriate forces, in a unified effort. Currently, that confidence is not warranted as attested to by the foregoing case studies. Existing doctrine was not adhered to. This is indicative of either a lack of confidence in the doctrine and the systems which it manifests, or a lack of professionalism evidenced by an inability to exercise the system properly. This lack of professionalism may be manifested as internal resistance, along service lines, toward operating jointly within the current Unified Command System (or any other that might be designed), or even worse, as ineptitude or incompetence.

There has been more than ample demonstration of an apparent lack of authority in our unifying entities. GEN David Jones (former Chairman of the JCS) contends that his former position must be strengthened in order to achieve

more efficient resource allocation, greater coherence in planning, and improved integration of effort in operations.<sup>62</sup> GEN Edward Meyer (former Chief of Staff of the Army) strongly supports an increase in the role of the unified commanders in resource determination and allocation.<sup>63</sup> In essence, both support the contention of many that a better balance between authority and responsibility in the Unified Command System is required. These measures, though easy to describe, are far more difficult to enact, as an imbalance in the opposite direction may have an equally adverse long term impact.

As stated earlier, we now appear to be at virtually the same level of sophistication and expertise in assuring unity of effort during joint operations as we were in 1958. The evolutionary change evidenced by the 1958 Amendment appears to have been inadequate. The major proposals for change being proffered once again seem to address only structural fixes of an evolutionary nature. Perhaps these too are doomed to the fate experienced by the 1958 Amendment, and what may really be needed is a revolutionary or radical departure from the way we operate. Some of these solutions are offered as well. One proposal in particular suggests creating a specially trained, highly mobile strike force to be plugged into crises as an attempt to avoid the inevitable mistakes associated with the short fused planning of complex joint operations.<sup>64</sup> However, what will happen when the

crisis calls for a force greater than that capable of being supplied by this alternative?

We can ill afford to continue to avoid grappling with the real root cause that underlies all the organizational and structural problem areas. What many have labeled "service parochialism" or the "wall of the component" must be addressed frontally and in no uncertain terms. The service culture or tradition is a powerful inhibitor of effective unified operations that is all pervasive, and one we must come to terms with. Underlying this phenomenon is a lack of confidence or trust in other services. Admittedly, this appears strongest in the Navy, but it is evident in the other services as well. Given our lack of in depth knowledge about the other services and a real dearth of expertise in the joint arena this is understandable. However, this awareness should provide us with at least part of the solution.

The first step in eroding the divisive power of the service cultures appears to be a serious effort at education. We must go further in developing, in our middle grade officers, a genuine in depth knowledge of the capabilities, techniques, and limitations of their sister services. We must comply with the staffing guidance of the UNAAF to assure proportionate staffing on our joint staffs to overcome any voids left by the education effort.

Second, we must begin to provide limited incremental increases in authority to our unified commanders. This should include increased budget input. The final arbiter of conflict between the unified commanders and service chiefs should be the Chairman of the JCS.

Lastly, exhaustive effort must be expended to enhance the prestige and rewards of service in the joint arena. This will necessarily require that additional administrative authority be granted to the unified commanders.

In conclusion, the current Unified Command System in the artificial world of intellectual discourse appears to provide for the necessary unity of command to obtain unity of effort. However, in its application in the real world, for what are primarily elemental human weaknesses, we are unable to exercise the system effectively. The solutions proffered in this paper will not negate the "friction" evident in all military undertakings; however, they will go a long way to address shortcomings that we can identify in advance of a crisis situation developing. We can ill afford to relive the lessons of Desert One and Grenada.

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